



Wikis are a kind of website that allows for the free creation and modification of content among registered users. Every change made on a wiki is logged and visible to everyone, and it's easy to revert the page to an earlier version if needed. There are different kind of wiki options available, from complex software you install yourself, to free registration-based services that don't require any special know-how. Wikis are great as collaborative organizational tools both in the classroom with students and in professional learning communities.

WHY A WIKI?

Collaborative Creation

Every page on a wiki is editable by anyone else, and new pages can be added effortlessly. For group research or writing projects, students can add or edit content from any web browser, and easily communicate with group members and offer feedback. For departmental organization, wikis can be used to build lesson plans and develop and share resources collaboratively.

Drawing Connections

Making pages in a wiki is easy because you're meant to make a lot of them... and then link them together. Students learn the importance of context and the ability to usefully reference other work by making connections between different ideas. Because others can see and edit their work, students are motivated to consider and analyze what they post.

Track Changes

Every change made to every page is tracked, so you can see exactly who edited what (and when), which greatly helps when trying to assess student participation. If something goes wrong, or if someone posts inappropriate material, it's easy to revert to an earlier version of the page.

EXAMPLES OF WIKI SOFTWARE



Wikispaces is the best wiki software for novice users. Setup is as easy as filling in a form, it has built-in discussion forums, and while other wiki software requires a unique wiki markup language, Wikispaces uses a graphical WYSIWIG editor, making it easy to modify text or insert other kinds of media onto the page. The K-12 Educational version (\$50/year) offers private wikis and features special student accounts that don't require an email address. (wikispaces.com)



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PBWiki also offers free wiki hosting, easy page editing tools, and special student accounts, as well as plugins for multimedia integration and e-mail alerts when someone updates a page. The main difference between the free versions of it and Wikispaces are mostly cosmetic. The Educational version is more expensive than Wikispaces (\$100/year), but some users may prefer its interface over other software. (pbworks.com)



If you're more technically-minded, try MediaWiki, the same software under the hood of Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia. It requires access to a web hosting account and experience with various code languages, but its features and customizability far outweigh those of Wikispaces or PBWiki. The MediaWiki software is completely open-source and released under a creative commons license. (mediawiki.org)